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FOR INFORMATION

THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF UNICEF

SUMMARY

The present report provides a brief overview of some of the activities being undertaken to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of UNICEF.

* E/ICEF/1996/2.

Introduction

1. The fiftieth anniversary of UNICEF is an occasion to review 50 years of working for children. During these past 50 years, UNICEF and its many partners - Governments, National Committees for UNICEF, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the public at large - have made a significant difference in the lives of millions of children. They have worked on every continent, but particularly in developing countries, to encourage political leadership, define national and local strategies and priorities, mobilize cities, towns and villages, provide technical assistance, and advocate for the rights of women and children everywhere. And there is much to celebrate in the way of achievements for the benefit of children in the areas of health, nutrition, education, water supply and sanitation, as well as in the care of children in situations of conflict or particular deprivation. For UNICEF, it is the achievements of the past, and the difficult challenges of the future, that define the commemoration of the event - 50 years ago on 11 December 1946 - when the United Nations General Assembly brought UNICEF into being.

2. Under the common overall theme of "Children First", UNICEF offices around the world have worked in consultation with other United Nations agencies and offices, Government and UNICEF partners to develop regional- and country-level anniversary activities. While allowing for an appropriate measure of formal commemoration events, these activities have the practical goal of accelerating fund-raising efforts, creating awareness of past achievements and future challenges facing children, and mobilizing support for programmes benefiting children. The extraordinary diversity of activities developed by UNICEF offices and National Committees is a result of the decentralized, practical and cost-effective approach to anniversary planning. At the same time, headquarters has provided overall thematic guidance to ensure a level of consistency, as well as support for information, communications, products and fund-raising.

Global opportunities

3. While there will be no global-level anniversary events, and mindful of the concern not to divert funds away from programmes and towards purely self-celebratory activities, there will be two occasions when the anniversary will be marked for global attention. The first will be the launch of the State of the World's Children report in London on 11 December 1995. This year a major portion of the report focuses on a retrospective of UNICEF during the past 50 years. The report launch press conference and accompanying press release also highlight the 50 year anniversary of UNICEF. Second, it is proposed that the United Nations General Assembly commemorate the UNICEF anniversary through broad-based participation at one of its meetings devoted solely for this purpose, preferably on 11 December 1996.

Activities at field offices

4. UNICEF regional offices have developed anniversary programmes with the priority regional goals for children in mind. As of this writing, several regional offices have planned for ministerial-level conferences to review progress on regional priorities during the anniversary year. Activities also

are being planned in support of programme sector goals in the regions. These include interregional meetings of experts and professionals in the areas of, for example, education, children in especially difficult circumstances and child rights.

5. UNICEF country offices are making the acceleration of mobilization and advocacy efforts to achieve country-specific goals a central priority for the anniversary year. In Argentina, for example, this takes the form of a mobilization effort around prominent sporting events and personalities that will reach millions with UNICEF messages through television broadcasts. In China, UNICEF and the Government have launched a country-wide postal stamp campaign featuring key messages about child health and welfare. In the Congo, a seminar involving NGOs and women's associations will consider the role of women and mothers in implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In Ecuador, candidates for the Presidency will meet with children in three major cities in special forums that will allow children's voices to be heard on concerns affecting their lives. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, UNICEF has worked within the framework established by United Nations country offices and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to develop a broad range of programmes that include television and radio broadcasts, publications and seminars all aimed at country-level goals and priorities for children. In 14 countries around the world where children have been affected by civil strife and war, UNICEF offices have developed plans to give a special burst of acceleration to already approved programmes during two weeks in July, thus generating global media exposure in consort with the 1996 Olympic Games and bringing much needed public attention and support to the plight of these children. These are but a few examples of the plethora of imaginative and practical programmes developed by UNICEF country offices.

Activities of National Committees

6. National Committees for UNICEF have developed imaginative and well-defined efforts with the goal of accelerating fund-raising during the anniversary year. In Finland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, for example, extensive month-by-month strategies have been developed to meet ambitious fund-raising goals for 1996. In Canada, the launch of a UNICEF Canada media award and the production of a special anniversary edition of the publication Communiqué will help to boost fund-raising efforts. In Australia, a new private sector fund-raising initiative is coupled with an extensive direct mail campaign to meet expanded targets for the anniversary year. In the Czech Republic, a strong advocacy campaign will involve all sectors of society, especially including children themselves, in awareness-raising efforts to benefit children. And in the United States of America, an ambitious fund-raising programme in cooperation with the Olympic Games, the "Olympic Aid" project, will be undertaken in 1996 for the benefit of children in war and civil strife.

Headquarters' activities

7. At headquarters, coordination of anniversary activities has been the responsibility of the UNICEF 50th Anniversary Task Force which includes representatives of headquarters' divisions. Key UNICEF divisions have developed

support activities related to the anniversary while keeping within existing work plans and approved budgets, and in close cooperation and consultation with field offices and National Committees to ensure complementarity and no duplication of efforts. A corporate UNICEF communications strategy makes available to field offices and National Committees support materials, including videos, television spots, fact sheets and photographs, all with the key accomplishments and future challenges of UNICEF in mind. In addition, a global advertising campaign has been developed on a pro bono basis with a prominent advertising firm to give additional fund-raising support to country-level efforts. Four special greeting card sets and anniversary-related products have been produced, and support is being given to private sector fund-raising initiatives both globally and at the country level. For the anniversary year, the External Relations divisions and the Programme Division have teamed up to develop a new linkage between the needs of children in countries experiencing civil conflict and the fund-raising efforts of National Committees through the "Olympic Aid" project.

8. An information note listing planned anniversary activities will be available in document E/ICEF/1996/CRP.2 to members of the Executive Board at the present session.